

Chapter 1:

History of the Area

To understand the attraction of Indiana's fastest growing area over the last 25 years, it is important to reflect upon its past. In fact, many of the origins for Carmel/Clay Township's current development pattern lie in historic decisions and actions made over the last 170 years. To really know the how's and why's behind how Carmel-Clay was developed is to know the origins of the settlements of Bethlehem, Mattsville, Mulberry Corner and Pleasant Grove. It is to know the significance of Northern Beach, the Monon, the Indiana Union Traction Line, White Chapel, Kinzers Cabin and Ellers Bridge. It is to know the legacy of various pioneer families including the McShanes, the Warrens, the Greens and the Moffitts.

This chapter is a short collection of information to ascertain how Carmel and Clay Township have evolved. The bulk of this background is taken from several historic documents including; *Maps of Indiana Counties in 1876*, the 1901 edition of the *History of Hamilton County* and the 1987 Carmel Sesquicentennial publication titled *Carmel: A Second Discovery*. Acknowledgments must also be made to information derived from the various newsletters of the Carmel Clay Historical Society and specifically to the oral history of Mr. Tom Rumer.

Early Settlements in Clay Township

Southern Hamilton County is prominent in early Indiana history. Settlements of Delaware and Miami Indians are well chronicled. Less well known are the origins of various prehistoric Indian mounds on the east side of White River. These mounds possibly date back 5,000 years. The recorded settlement in the



The John Kinzer log cabin, built in 1828, is located on the east side of Keystone around Main St. This structure is on the National Register of Historic Places. Photo taken from the book *Carmel: A Second Discovery*



The Maples, built by Benjamin Chapell in 1840 is located on West Smoky Row Road. Photo from the book *Carmel: A Second Discovery*.

area dates back to the early 1820's with the Conner family homestead along the east side of White River in Delaware Township. Restored, the Conner Prairie Farm gives us great insight into early 1800's life in Indiana and more particularly southern Hamilton County. In 1824 Francis McShane developed the first recorded permanent settlement on the west side of White River, when he built his cabin in the area on what is now the Orchard Park Subdivision. The McShanes daughter Sarah was the first recorded birth in the township. Their home at 10000 Westfield Boulevard still stands.

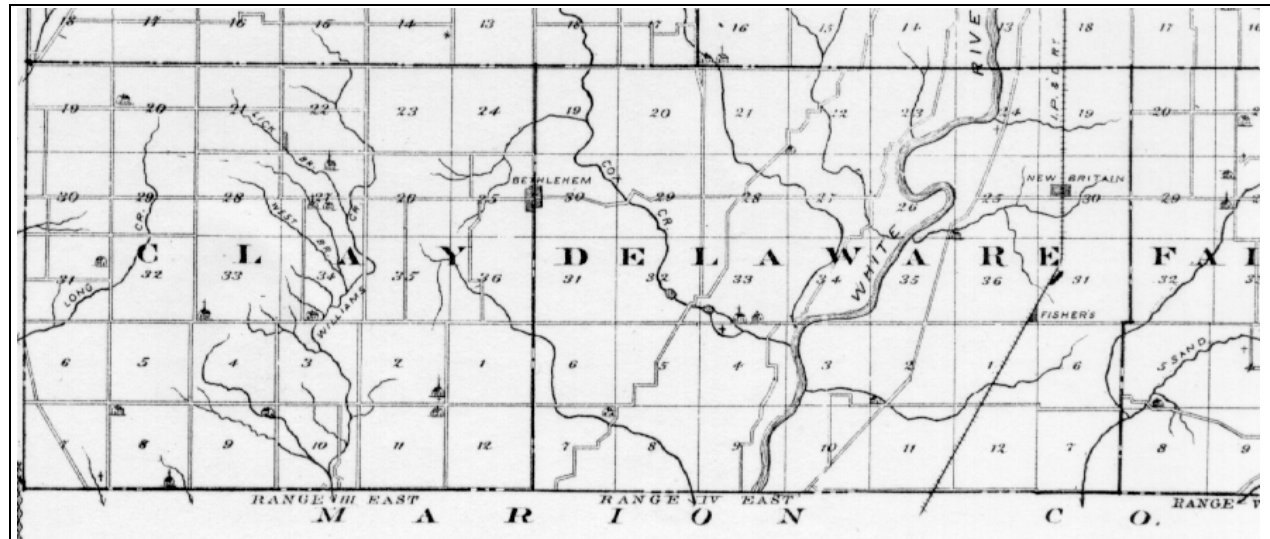
The Town of Bethlehem was laid out on the 13th day of April, 1837 by Seth Green, Daniel Warren and two others and consisted of fourteen lots at what is now the intersection of Rangeline and Main Street. In 1846 a post office was

established in the settlement. During the naming of the post office it was discovered that there already existed another Bethlehem Post Office in the State. Out of necessity a new name was agreed upon based on the biblical town of Carmel. This name was credited to the many Quaker and Methodist residents of the area.

Southwest of the original town layout, Daniel Warren had purchased the 160 acre quarter section as a family farm. His deed was signed by Andrew Jackson.

On the south bank of Cool Creek, eight miles southwest of Noblesville and currently the intersection of 116th Street and Haverstick, was the small village of Mattsville. This cluster of buildings dating back to the mid 1800's included a general

store, blacksmith shop and a post office. In 1874 a county historian wrote that, "There is quite an amount of trade and business done at this point, but not much prospect for improvement." Today, Mattsville has evolved to be the area of Woodbrook School, Woodland Springs, Woodland Green and Brookshire Subdivisions.



Map of area which now makes up Clay Township, from the book *Maps of Indiana Counties in 1876*.

In 1832, a school was constructed on a farm at what is now 106th and College Avenue. Two decades later the Pleasant Grove Methodist Church arose next to what is now the historic Pleasant Grove cemetery. Over time this area evolved into the community of Home Place.

From these pockets of settlements established in the 1830's have evolved the areas we now know commonly as Carmel and Clay Township.

Early Transportation Links

While these early settlements flourished in varying degrees, their connections to the outside world similarly grew in importance.

Clearly many of the early routes through Carmel and Clay Township were the extension of old Indian paths along the White River and various streams throughout the township. Mattsville Pike now better known as 116th Street was formerly such a pathway. This major east-west route was the site of the Eller Covered Bridge over White River which was erected in 1869. This landmark bridge succumbed in 1959 to vandals who burned it beyond repair. The “Indian Trail” was a north south pathway along Cool Creek which crossed Mattsville Pike. This old “Indian Trail” evolved into a stagecoach stopover for travelers going to the state capitol.

Another route which grew into prominence was The Indianapolis-Peru Pike. This roadway which became Rangeline and then Road 31 crossed on either side of a huge Mulberry Tree at what is now 106th Street. The area was better known as Mulberry Corner. The Indianapolis-Peru Pike or Rangeline Road, was at one time a tollway. In addition to its significance as the location of the Town of Bethlehem later to be known as Carmel, the road was the boundary line between Clay Township and Delaware Township. This boundary line was later changed in the 1950’s and moved to the White River.



This marker placed by Union State Bank in 1979 records the historic significance for Carmel around the intersection of Main Street and Rangeline. This photo taken from the book *Carmel: A Second Discovery*.



An old crossing of Cool Creek along the “Indian Trail” allowed passage into Mattsville in what is now the Woodlands area. This bridge was taken out for the development of homes along Windsor Drive in the 1970’s. Photo from the book *Carmel: A Second Discovery*.

Perhaps the most significant and recent incremental road decision which directed growth and development of Carmel and Clay Township was the decision in the 1960’s by the State of Indiana to extend a new state highway from Keystone in Marion County northward through Hamilton County.

While the incremental pattern of certain historic paths evolving into major roadways directed much of the development pattern we know today, the construction of railways throughout the township also had significant impact on the urbanization pattern.

The Monon Railroad or “Hoosier Line” as it was known connected Chicago and Louisville by way of 541 miles of track in Indiana. The Monon was the first rail line to cross Indiana from south to north. It was

first incorporated on July 8, 1847 as the New Albany and Salem Railroad. The Civil War pushed the fledgling line into a position of importance, providing a supply line to the Mason-Dixon line. In 1883 a station was constructed in Carmel. This station has been subsequently moved farther west of its original location and renovated. For decades, the Monon was a flourishing line between Chicago, Indianapolis and Louisville.

The railroad operated through Carmel and Clay Township as a freight and passenger line until 1984. Since that time the rail right-of-way has been abandoned. In Marion County this right-of-way is in the process of being developed as a bicycle and pedestrian trail.

Parallel to the Monon tracks the Indiana Union Traction Line constructed an Interurban Railroad line between Indianapolis and Noblesville through Carmel. Evidence of this right-of-way is still in existence in the area between the Monon and Rangeline, south of Eighth St. This interurban line operated between 1903 and 1938 and provided the first real commuter link between the outlying communities and downtown Indianapolis. This line offered cheap fares and good connections for day travel to numerous Indiana towns and cities. It even had its own stock cars for the transporting of cattle and other livestock to market. At one time there were a dozen or more trains running each way each day. The alignment of this old interurban line is best viewed at the southeast corner of Carmel City Hall.



This photo shows the Carmel Monon Depot while the line was still in active use and before the Depot was renovated by the Carmel Clay Historical Society. Photo from the book *Carmel: A Second Discovery*.

These rail lines along with Rangeline's connection between Westfield and Indianapolis subsequently formed the axis along which the earliest urbanization of Carmel and Clay Township took place.

Other Shapers of the Development Pattern

Residents of Carmel and Clay Township have historically had higher income characteristics than many other outlying areas Indianapolis. Similar to other urban patterns the reason for this pattern is consistent with other basic urban growth theories. While it is logical that Carmel and Clay Township have been the beneficiary of the outward migration of the higher income Meridian Street, it is useful to understand why these residents selected the north in the first place. Reviewing metropolitan areas developed in the 1800's before central water supply facilities were in place, one phenomenon exists. Specifically, in these urban areas, the higher income neighborhoods tended to locate upstream, presumably where the water supply was more pure. Indianapolis certainly fits this model as do other major urban areas such as Cincinnati, Louisville, Dallas and others. In those rare areas where the major river runs from south to north, the historic higher income neighborhoods are located on the south. Denver is one of the best examples of this model.

From 1900 until 1950 Carmel and Clay Township held steady in its population. The Town of Carmel (later city) had a population of 498 in 1900 and 1,009 in 1950. Similarly, Clay Township had a population of 1283 in 1900 and just over 2,000 in 1950.

In her book Carmel: A Second Discovery, Dorothy S. Smith succinctly points to two public policy actions made in the decade between 1950 and 1960 which set Carmel and Clay Township on its course of experiencing rapid growth between 1970 and 1995.

The first public policy action took place in 1954 when a public referendum was supported to enlarge Clay Township from Rangeline Road to White River so that Carmel Clay schools could be created. The second action occurred when the state



of Indiana determined that Keystone Avenue in Marion County needed to be extended through Clay Township as US 431. Opening up the entire eastern half of the township for development when this roadway was completed in 1964, Carmel and Clay Township were positioned to accommodate a massive influx of growth when Indianapolis became suburbanized beyond its county boundaries beginning in the late 1960's. Carmel changed from town to city status in 1975.